

2007 SPRING REPORT OF THE SAVEYOURLEATHERWOODHONEY ASSOCIATION

After being largely occupied during the past three months in assisting with the preparation of the TBA submission to the Commonwealth Inquiry into the Honey Bee Industry in Australia, we have now held our 2007 AGM and recommenced our inspections of forest harvesting plans and the relevant coupes on the ground. The minutes of the AGM will be circulated to all members in the near future. The inspection of plans of coupes either about to be harvested or already recently harvested in the Huon District and the Derwent District, has been very instructive. In the Huon District the two coupes being monitored, are claimed by Forestry Tasmania to have been planned and harvested to retain the commercial stands of leatherwood. Inspection of these coupes was not possible while harvesting was in progress.

We expect that an inspection will take place in the near future. In the Derwent District the coupes to be harvested this year and early next year were the subject of a briefing by the District Manager, Mr Rod Hill, who with the relevant planner, advised that notwithstanding all three coupes containing leatherwood, all three were to be clearfelled using the cable method. We were told that while the planner had sympathy for the beekeepers using the area for leatherwood resource, their instructions were that the veneer content was required urgently, and no suitable alternative coupes were available and that clearfell harvesting would go ahead. It was also claimed that as there was no concentration of leatherwood in particular parts of the coupes, but scattered throughout them, it was impracticable to retain any leatherwood, that is, selective harvesting was not an option that Forestry Tasmania were prepared to consider.

Because of the statements by Mr Hill and the planner, these coupes were inspected as soon as the beekeeper involved in the area was available. The result of the inspection was as follows:

WE044A - this coupe appeared to have been already harvested with the total destruction of the leatherwood content. Some small concession had been made to amend coupe boundaries to exclude some leatherwood along the lower stream side areas, but the bulk of the resource had disappeared. The beekeeper concerned, estimated that the hive carrying capacity of the coupe had been 25 hives.

WE038A - this coupe is about to be harvested.

It contains some commercial stands of leatherwood concentrated in light timbered country. There is not a great deal of large mature veneer or pulpwood timber in the coupe. The hive carrying capacity of this coupe is estimated to be 12 hives.

WE039D – this coupe is scheduled to be harvested early in 2008.

It contains substantial commercial stands of leatherwood scattered among the mature veneer and pulp wood trees. The hive carrying capacity of this coupe is estimated to be 25 hives.

We have advised The District Manager, Mr Hill of the result of the inspection and requested an urgent review of the coupe harvesting plans in the light of the provisions of the Guidelines for Beekeeping on State Forest.

The Guidelines have not been followed.

The statement in writing by Mr G Sargison, (letter dated 21st December 2006), that the Guidelines would be applied, was clearly of no value.

As early as 2004 these coupes were among a number brought to the attention of Forestry Tasmania, as being of value to the beekeepers, in a request for a moratorium of leatherwood rich coupes. It appears that even with more than adequate notice, Forestry Tasmania is unable to guarantee to prepare its plans to take into account the leatherwood content as required by the Guidelines

This situation flies in the face of the claims of Forestry Tasmania that a “ new approach “ to preparing harvesting plans has been put in place.

It appears that where there is a genuine contest between timber requirements and the beekeeping resource, timber requirements will continue to prevail.

It seem therefore that the “new approach “ announced by Forestry Tasmania, is window dressing, and nothing more.

This situation has been put to the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition, the Greens, the Commonwealth Minister for Forests, Mr Eric Abetz, and their involvement requested.

If no reassessment of the coupe harvesting takes place in the near future, then the matter will be the subject of a media release, and lobbying via the media will commence in earnest similar to that which took place in 2005 and 2006. It seems clear that unless the new guidelines currently being negotiated, are made law by their inclusion in the Forest Practises Code, then there will be no certainty that leatherwood retention will be a focus at the planning stage of any forest harvesting in Tasmania.

For those of you who either have not renewed your membership or have never been a member, please consider joining the Association. For \$15.00 you get to support an active organization which is focused exclusively on lobbying for and publicising the importance of the leatherwood resource to beekeepers and the pollination industry in Tasmania, and its retention at any cost.

The website of the Association contains details of how to join. The site address is – saveyourleatherwoodhoney@bigpond.com.

We are just beginning the monitoring process, (as outlined above), and this will continue throughout 2007 and 2008.

Commercial stands of leatherwood outside World Heritage areas will become a thing of the past unless Forestry Tasmania treats the retention of the resource as equal in importance to timber production.

Bob Davey (President).